

High risk to art

By Ben Cranston and Nick Butterly

INDUSTRIAL development posed a "high risk" to ancient Aboriginal art on the Burrup Peninsula, some of which was rare enough to warrant national heritage listing, a new report commissioned by the Federal Government has warned.

"The current footprint of industry on the Burrup Peninsula, and its anticipated spread, present both direct and indirect impacts which place cultural heritage, and the art of the archipelago, at high risk of being endangered," the report by Jo McDonald Cultural Heritage Management said.

Federal Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull had pledged to

place the area on a National Heritage list by the middle of this year, but the promise comes too late to prevent ancient Aboriginal rock art being moved to make way for Woodside Petroleum's new \$10 billion Pluto LNG project.

Friends of Rock Art convener Robin Chapple said roughly 13 per cent of rock art had already been destroyed over the past 25 years.

"Woodside has already moved 43 rock carvings – some of which have been damaged – and plans to move a further 100 to 200 in its next stage of development," Mr Chapple said.

"Admittedly, Woodside have done a lot of work on diminishing the footprint of the Pluto plant but it's like squeezing a size-10 foot into a size-six shoe.

"There is no room for Woodside to expand without further damage and relocation of more rock art."

A Woodside spokeswoman said no rock art had been damaged or destroyed as a result of Woodside's Pluto LNG development.

"We have safely moved 42 engravings to a nearby natural setting selected with, and monitored by, traditional Aboriginal custodians," she said.

"We estimate we will need to move a total of 100 to 200 engravings. This number should be seen in the context of the estimated 1 million engravings in Dampier rock art precinct."

The rock art has again been included on a list of the world's 100 most endangered sites.